

The Macomb Daily

Macomb County executive pushes Adopt-A-County Road program

By Jameson Cook - Macomb Daily Staff Writer - July 4, 2011

With Macomb County in the midst of record-setting road improvements, county officials want to spruce up the areas abutting the pristine pavement to keep up appearances.

County Executive Mark Hackel and Road Department Director Robert Hoepfner are pushing a resurgence in the Adopt-A-County Road program, which was created about three decades ago, but participation and enthusiasm have waned.

Hackel wants to re-energize residents, students, businesses and civic groups to help remove trash and debris because government can't do it all. The county is spending a record \$48 million this year on road projects.

"This isn't just a responsibility of government, it's the responsibility of every one of us to pitch in and keep our neighborhoods clean," Hackel said. "We need to kick this into high gear. This is what the sense of community is all about."

Hackel discussed the program this week while helping clean a half-mile stretch of Metropolitan Parkway from Moravian to Garfield roads in Clinton Township that has been adopted by county employees.

Macomb County maintains 1,700 miles of roads, 1,100 of them eligible for the program. Only 300 roads are kept up by various groups countywide.

Hackel said showing off clean roads is part of "community development."

"Economic development is one thing — how do you attract business to want come to an area — but a lot of that is about community development where people move or locate to and where they feel welcome, they feel invited, they feel comfortable," Hackel said.

Hackel noted that while most Michigan communities lost population, according to the 2010 Census, Macomb gained 53,000 residents, by far the state's largest population increase.

"I gotta believe it's because of a sense of community," he said. "People wanted to come here because they felt like we have safer neighborhoods. ... There's a sense of welcomeness."

Hackel, the former sheriff, said he believes "in the broken window theory" in which people behave according to their surroundings. Crime falls in well-kept neighborhoods.

“Our sense of community is having a safe neighborhood, and that adds to economic opportunities for that community as well because businesses will come there, they’ll be attracted because their employees will be living there,” he said.

Hackel noted that jail inmates often are commissioned to clean the roadways but can only do so much.

Hackel said he would like to see schools and courts get involved in taking advantage of Adopt-A-County Road to fulfill community service requirements.

A group can adopt a section of road any length but typically is a half mile or one mile long. The county supplies the safety vests and the trash bags, and picks up the bags.

A group is required to clean the stretch once a year but is encouraged to do it at least twice a year.

The county may establish a county cleanup day once or twice a year, Hackel said.

For more information on the adopt-a-county road program call (586) 463-8671 or visit **www.macombcountymi.gov/roads**. (with Video)

